often an agent of the Aleppo merchant who furnishes the capital and has the necessary warehouses in Aleppo and the commercial knowledge and connections in the Syrian market and abroad to dispose of the crop at the best terms. 438 441

I. The Problem of Storage and Warehouses

The dependance of Jazirah on Aleppo merchants is such that until the present time there is not a single warehouse or silo to store wheat for a few months in all Jazirah belonging to an individual merchant or big farmer. During harvest season, the wheat is stacked in the open near the railway stations and left without cover until it is shipped to Aleppo. The hangers of the stations can only hold a small part of the crop. The Mira built a few depots but it is not known whether they will be put at the disposal of merchants. 438 241

The special conditions of cultivation in Jazirah connected with the problem of credit and land ownership make the transport of wheat from the farms to the stations during harvest season a hectic affair. This is caused by two reasons: in the first place, the farmer is always in need of money and has to ship his crop quickly to Aleppo to sell it, and, secondly, even if the big farmer is not in need of money, he does not feel it is safe to keep his crop in the villages. In most cases, he is only a tenant and it does not pay for him to construct a depot on land, he does not own. Even if he owned the land, he would hesitate to keep his crop away from the market until the winter months when he might need money but might find himself unable to transport his crop because of bad roads.

The logical solution would be to construct warehouses in the towns or near the stations, but, here again, the lack of capital prevents the accomplishment of this job.

The Kurd is the only farmer who keeps a part of his crop on the land. As a good and thrifty peasant, he stores his seeds, the provisions for his family and usually an amount of wheat equal to the seeds he planted. If anything remains, he sells to buy clothes and foodstuffs. The Kurd keeps the extra wheat he has in holes dug in the ground called "jifr". The hole is usually two meters in diameter and 2-3 meters deep. It is lined with "tibn" to keep the moisture away and the wheat remains in a good condition in it for several months. The peasant has a number of these jifrs depending on the 241 251

14:International Bank S-5 (1954) 1955 MD1 Syria MD1

Marketing

241
442
458

The mission now comes to a consideration of the last but by no means the least important agricultural problem, marketing. This subject has many aspects, including transport, storage and grading, quality control and price stabilization. Improved marketing practices can yield the producer better prices and the consumers a higher quality product.

Elsewhere the mission discusses the vital factor of transport, and it has already commented on the role cooperatives could play in the local marketing of agricultural products. Here the mission wishes in the first instance to focus on the great importance of better facilities for the storage, cleaning and fumigating of grain. The lack of these facilities and the consequences for Syria have already been emphasized. The mission found a widespread recognition of their need in Syria, except perhaps among the merchants, who naturally feel that public grain storage and the extension of credit on the basis of warehouse receipts will weaken their control of the market. The mission considers it imperative, however, that Syria proceed with a grain storage program in order to strengthen the farmers and to maintain Syria's position in an increasingly competitive world grain market.

It is estimated that in the next decade some 760,000 tons of grain, principally wheat and barley, will enter commercial channels annually, and that this volume will be distributed among the producing regions approximately as follows: Jezireh, 400,000 tons; Euphrates, 95,000; Aleppo, 95,000; Hauran, 60,000; Homs-Hama, 50,000.

The mission recommends that total storage capacity of about 230,000 tons be established by 1960 at an estimated cost of £S 21 million. In the grain port of Latakia a transit silo with a capacity of 20,000-40,000 tons should be built. In Aleppo new facilities with a capacity of 60,000 tons are needed to supplement existing warehouse space, serve the surrounding grain-producing areas and operate as a reservoir for the rapid replenishment of the Latakia silo. For the Jezireh the mission suggests storage capacity of about 150,000 tons. The Latakia and Aleppo facilities should be mechanized and furnished with cleaning and fumigating equipment. In the Jezireh, however, the mission suggests that provisionally only about a fifth be mechanized. The storage there would consist simply of covered sheds which could be economically built.

The Latakia and Aleppo storage will enable Syria to export clean grain,

14:International Bank S-5 (1954)1955 MD1 Syria MD1

free of infestation, which will better be able to withstand competition on the world market and fetch higher prices. The Jezireh storage will make it unnecessary for farmers to dump their grain on the market immediately after the harvest, enable them to obtain credit on easier terms, and lower the cost of transport. All the facilities together will significantly reduce the substantial losses resulting at present from exposure to weather, infestation and rodents. The mission's estimate of the direct advantages resulting from the reduction of losses and the improvement in prices leads it to conclude that farmers and merchants would have ample incentive to utilize the storage facilities, even after taking into account the storage charges they would have to pay on the basis of operating costs and amortization.

We believe that the storage facilities, even when they have to be built by the government, should be operated by qualified private management under a long-term lease which would specify the maximum permissible storage charges. Farmers and merchants are unlikely to use facilities operated by the government itself.

Measures to improve the marketing of certain other products should also be taken. Large quantities of raw milk are now marketed in major cities without adequate quality control or veterinary inspection of dairy cattle. The UNICEF, concerned over milk supply for children, has apparently offered to provide equipment and assistance for the installation of a pasteurization plant in Damascus, and the mission urges that this project be carried out as promptly as possible. A similiar plant may be feasible for Aleppo. It is important that some control be established also over the source of supply. Periodic tuberculin and blood agglutination tests for the diagnosis of tuberculosis and brucellosis in dairy animals might, for example, be initiated. In Aleppo, where many dairy cows are kept in the city under unsanitary conditions which produce a high incidence of tuberculosis, the removal of dairy cattle to locations outside the city is strongly recommended.

Improvements in public abattoirs would also bring about better prices for producers and provide a better quality meat for the consumer. Existing abattoirs are for the most part old, unhygienic and possess no means for salvaging many of the valuable by-products of slaughtering which could be used for the manufacture of fertilizers, chemicals and drugs. While complete renovation is not feasible in the immediate future, the mission suggests that a start be made by erecting a modern abattoir in Damascus at an estimated cost of £S 600,000.

14:International Bank S-5 (1954) 1955 MD1 Syria MD1

444 capacity significantly, the restrictive policy may have contributed to higher trucking charges. Recently there has been some relaxation of the restrictions. The mission concedes that in principle it might be desirable to regulate the number of trucks in order to prevent excessive investment in road transport. The government, however, has little knowledge about the adequacy of the number of trucks to guide it in applying such a regulation, and it would be better to achieve the objective indirectly by charging a high fee for new truck licenses, as is done in the case of tank trucks.

504 III PORTS

One of the most important transport projects undertaken by the Syrian government in recent years is the construction of the port of Latakia. This is Syria's only real port other than Banias, which handles just the oil coming in over the pipeline from the oilfields in northern Iraq. The decision to create a port at Latakia was formally taken early in 1950 when a company, capitalized at £S 24 million, was formed to establish and operate the port. Nearly all of the capital has been furnished by the government; private capital has subscribed only 10%, despite a government guarantee of a 5% dividend.

Natural conditions at Latakia, as indeed along most of the eastern Mediterranean coast, are not particularly favorable to a port. There is no natural harbor and heavy winds from January to March impede port operations. For this reason, the principal feature of the port program is the construction of a breakwater and the deepening of the basin behind it. Other features call for the construction of quays and warehouses with a capacity of 15,000 cubic meters and the installation of cargo-handling equipment. Work on the breakwater and quays is proceeding and plans for the equipment of the port are being perfected. The breakwater and quays should be finished in 1956 and the remainder of the work in the following year. To complete these plans will probably entail a further outlay [448] of £S 38 million over the coming years. Plans at this stage do not provide for the building of a grain silo. The mission's sole recommendation is that this omission be remedied, since in our opinion the installation of mechanized grain handling equipment is imperative in a port where the bulk of the traffic consists of cereals.

Meanwhile, as previously indicated, the volume of cargo handled by